

into a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASEY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for 15 minutes, if I could.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. President.

IRAQ

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise in support of S. Res. 636 that Senator LIEBERMAN will be trying to introduce tomorrow. It is a resolution of the Senate, and he will be trying to introduce it tomorrow. I am going to speak on it tonight. I am a coauthor of it. It speaks about the phenomenal success of the surge, of troops into Iraq. But it is more than just a surge of 30,000 troops. It has been a surge on many fronts: political, economic, and militarily. The resolution would be a statement by the Senate recognizing that the surge has worked, that those who executed the strategy are recognized for being the great leaders they are, it is a compliment to our troops, and it is also a recognition that the Iraqi people have stepped to the plate and changed the tides that existed in their country of extremism and Iraq now is becoming a stable government, a country where people are working out their differences through the rule of law and representative democracy, and al-Qaida has been delivered a dramatic blow.

To put this in perspective, at the end of 2006, it was clear the old strategy was not working, that the troops we had in Iraq were not being used in a way to counter the insurgency and were not enough in number. All this came to a head in late 2006 when Senator MCCAIN, myself, and Senator LIEBERMAN, among others, were arguing for a change in strategy.

We had, I think, seven visits to Iraq; at the time about four. During our visits—Senator MCCAIN, myself, and Senator LIEBERMAN—every time we went, it was worse than the time before, up until the surge became the new strategy. The sergeants, the colonels, and captains were very blunt with us, saying this was not working. It was clear to us we did not have the right number of troops or the right strategy. In January of 2007, President Bush, much to his credit, announced a new strategy,

an infusion of, I think, 30,000 new combat brigades into Iraq to bring about security.

It has always been our belief—Senator MCCAIN, myself, and Senator LIEBERMAN—that without security, it is hard to have a representative democracy. It is one thing to talk about political compromise and the difficulty of talk radio and MoveOn.Org. But it is another thing to talk about political compromise when your family is being murdered. It is very hard to administer the rule of law when the judges and the prospective participants in the trial are under siege and under attack. So without better security, there was no hope.

I have always believed that a security environment is required before you can have political compromise, economic progress, or any forgiveness. The economic progress in Iraq is pretty stunning: 5 percent growth. The oil revenues have almost doubled. Oil production has almost doubled. The economy is doing very well in Iraq compared to a year ago. The availability of energy and power is dramatically up. So the everyday life of the Iraqi people is still a struggle and difficult but far better than it was a year ago. There are a lot of people purchasing refrigerators and televisions and other electronic devices. The availability of power is at an all-time high. But demand is also at an all-time high.

Economically, inflation is down and the Iraqis have a surplus. People say: Well, should they pay us back? I would like to get some of our money back. They are certainly paying more. They are paying for all major reconstruction projects now, and they are paying for the operation of their army, for the most part.

But the best way to pay us back as a nation is for Iraq to be a place that embraces democracy, rejects al-Qaida, would be a buffer to Iranian ambitions, would be a place where a woman would have a say about her child. All that, to me, is priceless. For Iraq to go from a Saddam Hussein dictatorship to a representative government where Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds live in peace with each other, at peace with their neighbors is a major sea change in the overall war on terror and is a priceless event as far as I am concerned.

To have an Arab nation in the heart of the Mideast, a Muslim nation that rejected al-Qaida, is exactly what we need more of. The Iraqi people need to be acknowledged as to their sacrifice. What they have done has been tough. Their casualty rate has been about three times ours. The political reconciliation progress is moving forward now in Iraq. Fifteen of the 18 political benchmarks have been met by the Iraqi Government. The deBaathification law was passed. That allows members of the Baath Party under Saddam to come back into the Government and get some of their old jobs back.

The amnesty law was passed. That means Sunni insurgents who were cap-

tured a year or 2 years ago as part of the insurgency to topple the Government in Baghdad will be let go and go back home and become part of the new Iraq.

Forgiveness is required before you have reconciliation. You see throughout Iraq a level of forgiveness that I think is encouraging. For the Shias and the Kurds to pass the amnesty law, telling their Sunni brothers and sisters: Let's start over, is a major step forward. For the Sunnis to embrace new elections after they boycotted them in 2005 is a recognition by the Sunni factions in Iraq that democracy is the way to go: Go to Baghdad through representation, not through violence. The Kurds have created stability in the north, and they are working with their partners in the south and in the west with the Sunnis and the Shias.

Maliki has stepped to the plate. I was not so excited about his leadership a year ago, but he has turned things around. The Shia-dominated Government in Iraq is taking on Shia militias in the southern part of Iraq, in the Basra area, that have been supported by Iranian special groups. The knock on Maliki was: Well, he is a sectarian leader. The fact that he would take on al-Sadr and Shia-backed militias from Iran—Iranian-backed militias in his own country—is a sign that he does not want to be dominated by Iranian theology.

So I am hopeful more so now than ever that Iraq has turned a corner economically, politically, and militarily. Their army is 100,000 stronger than it was before the surge, and they performed well after a slow start in the southern part of Iraq against the Shia militias, and they are fighting very well in Mosul.

One of the most stunning events and turnarounds, I believe, has been the recent handing over of Anbar Province back to the Iraqis. About 2 years ago, Anbar was declared lost. It was an al-Qaida stronghold—the Sunni part of Iraq—where al-Qaida was going up and down the streets of Ramadi holding a parade. And it was a very tough situation in Fallujah.

What happened was a combination of events. The Sunni Iraqis in that part of Iraq, in Anbar, tasted al-Qaida life and did not like it. They joined with the coalition forces and, with the addition of more troops, made a strong stand against al-Qaida. About a week ago, Anbar was turned back over to the Iraqis, and al-Qaida has been delivered a very punishing blow. They are not yet completely defeated, but structurally they are in disarray, and you see the message traffic among al-Qaida operatives that Iraq has been a nightmare for them, and it has turned out to be their Vietnam. At the end of the day, anything that will diminish al-Qaida is good for us. There is no more diminishing event when it comes to al-Qaida than to have fellow Sunni Muslims turn on them.

I am proud of the Iraqi people. They need to do more. I think they will. The surge has worked beyond my expectation—not just militarily. Politically and economically the surge has worked, and we are on the road now to what I would say is victory in Iraq.

People ask me: What is winning? Winning is being able to leave Iraq and have behind an ally in the overall war on terror. Winning would be having a partner in the heart of the Arab world, the Iraqi Government, that will reject al-Qaida and deny al-Qaida a safe haven or a foothold. Winning would be having a Shia-led government that will stand up to Iran, be a good neighbor but not allow Iran to become stronger. Winning would be a place in the heart of the Middle East where a woman would have a say about her children through democracy. Winning would be the rule of law replacing the rule of gun. All of that makes us safer. The consequences of losing in Iraq would be enormous and would have been enormous to our national security interests. Al-Qaida would have claimed victory over the United States. Iran would be dominating the southern part of Iraq. The sectarian violence that was widespread, in my view, would have spread throughout the region. There would have been Sunni-Shia battles throughout the Middle East and Turkey, and the Kurds would have had a real problem among themselves. So a failed state in Iraq would have been a nightmare for our security interests. Winning in Iraq means a stable government aligned with us that rejects al-Qaida, and means a buffer to Iranian ambitions; a nation that accepts democracy and would be a peaceful partner to its neighbors. That is a major victory in the war on terror because it was a place where al-Qaida was defeated by Muslims.

This resolution in great detail lays out what happened over the last year and a half regarding the surge. It is a statement by the Congress acknowledging success on the battlefield and in other areas. I hope this is one area where Republicans and Democrats can come together and recognize the great success of our troops and acknowledge the Iraqi people themselves looked chaos in the eye and turned it away. I know it has been difficult for this country; we spent a lot of money and lost a lot of lives. But this war we are involved in is not a place, it is not about taking your eye off the ball; it is about fighting the enemy wherever the enemy goes. I would argue that the world is better off without Saddam Hussein being in power. The big mistake we made after the fall of Baghdad is not having enough troops and letting the situation get out of hand. I don't believe it was a mistake at all to go after Saddam's regime after 17 U.N. resolutions were ignored. So I think the world is much better off without Saddam Hussein being in power.

I would argue we are now on the road to victory in Iraq where we are going

to have a stable, functioning, representative government to replace a dictatorship—that will be our ally. This has come about with a lot of sacrifice on behalf of the men and women in uniform, their civilian counterparts, and Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus have been great teammates over in Iraq. Here we are—a year ago tomorrow General Petraeus testified before the Congress. I wish to let him and all of those under his command, as well as Ambassador Crocker and all of those civilians who have been helping him, know that they have done an enormous good for the world, that they have protected our country from what I thought would have been a humiliating defeat. They have prevented that defeat. They have turned things around so that if we have the right exit strategy now, we are going to secure a major victory on the war on terror. Senator McCain: Hats off to him. He has always been about winning. We are coming home, but we are going to come home winners, with honor, and a more secure America because of what has happened in Iraq in the last year and a half due to the surge.

I hope and pray we can have a vote on this resolution. It would be a good thing for the Senate to do. Whether you agree with us going into Iraq, that is an honest, genuine debate. Once there, we couldn't lose. We were about to lose. Thank God the surge was implemented, and more than anything else, thank God for good leadership, brave young men and women representing our Nation who took the fight to the enemy, and God bless the Iraqi people. I wish them nothing but the best in the future. I do believe the best days lie ahead for the Iraqi people, and that 20 years from now, long after many of us are gone, here in the Senate we will look back on this period and understand what was at stake better than we do today. We will be looking at an Iraq that is part of the solution, not the problem, in the Mideast. History will say that the surge was a monumental event in the course of the war on terror, that the change in strategy was necessary work. I think militarily they will be studying this Petraeus plan for decades to come, and economically and politically, the courage that has been shown by the Iraqi people to step to the plate should be acknowledged by all of us.

At the end of the day, if we had continued with the old strategy, I think we would have lost. Iraq would have been a failed state and it would have been a mighty blow to this country and the overall war on terror. Now I think we can say with confidence we have turned a corner. Nothing is irreversible. However, I think the gains made on the political, economic, and military front are going to be hard to roll back if we will stay the course and end this fight. We are very close now to having our troops come home in a way that will make us all safer. I have al-

ways believed this one thing about Iraq: Our national security interests in history will judge us not by the date we left Iraq but by what we left behind. I think we are very close to being able to say in the coming months that we are going to leave behind a new nation that is part of the solution, not the problem; a place where Muslims said no to al-Qaida; a place where different groups chose the rule of law over the rule of gun; a place where the woman can finally have a say about her child and her children's future in the heart of the Mideast; and that truly makes us all safer.

I do hope Senator LIEBERMAN will be allowed to introduce his resolution and we will have a vote on that.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MENENDEZ). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in July, the House of Representatives responsibly passed legislation to prevent the highway trust fund from running out of money. They put the date that the \$8 billion would be transferred at October 1, the end of the fiscal year, the beginning of the new fiscal year. That legislation passed by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 387 to 37.

The reason the bill receives such strong support is Democrats and Republicans in the House recognize that funding for these critical transportation projects is extremely important. This is infrastructure. For every billion dollars we spend in infrastructure, there are 47,500 high-paying jobs, and a lot of other jobs spin off from that amount. So this \$8 billion is about half a million jobs. Yes, that is a lot when you think about the problems we have in the country today economically.

But when that bill reached the Senate before we left for the convention recesses, Republicans objected to it. Since that time, the legislation has even taken on more urgency. Gas prices have skyrocketed. Fewer Americans are driving, which has decreased the flow of the money into the trust fund.

Second, the Bush-McCain economy has plunged America further into economic peril. Just last month, 84,000 jobs were lost, bringing to the total this year during the Bush-McCain era over 600,000 jobs lost this year alone. And today it was announced that this year will be the largest deficit in the history of our country. So we have an economy that is in deep trouble, we have 84,000 jobs lost just last month and more than 600,000 this year, and it